

Williams Probe Halted FBI Taps

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WASHINGTON — The FBI wiretapped the offices of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Atlanta headquarters for 2½ years in the mid-1960s, but called off the surveillance for fear it might jeopardize a "possible prosecution" of civil rights leader Hosea Williams, according to newly released FBI documents.

Williams, now a state representative from DeKalb County, was investigated but never accused in connection with the alleged theft of several automobiles that wound up being used by SCLC workers in civil rights efforts in the South.

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Two other men, Harold Belton Andrews and Morris Finley, who is now an Atlanta city councilman, were convicted in connection with the alleged thefts. Finley was later allowed to enter a no contest plea and sentenced to two years probation.

The wiretapping of the SCLC's Atlanta office, the Atlanta residence of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the New York office of the SCLC was described in a series of memoranda from the "official and confidential" files of the late FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover.

The files were released after they were demanded by the Center for National Security Studies under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

According to one internal FBI memo, the wiretap was installed at SCLC's Auburn Avenue headquarters Nov. 8, 1963, and "maintained" until June 21, 1965, "when Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach ordered it discontinued since he thought it might be prejudicial to the possible prosecution of Hosea Williams, Southern Christian Leadership Conference official, under Interstate Transportation of Stolen Vehicles Statutes."

A number of documents in the 317-page file show that Williams' link to the case stemmed from a charge by another defendant in the case — apparently Andrews — that he had stolen cars to sell to the SCLC's voter education effort, which Williams headed. The documents do not indicate that the bureau was able to substantiate those charges.

At the same time, several of the memos contained clear references to the sensitive nature of the case and one dated Nov. 18, 1965, said King's hotel rooms at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco from May 1964, and at the American Hotel in New York from 3 to 4, 1965.

Nine memos containing information from the taps were sent to Kennedy the FBI, the documents at

dated June 22, 1966, said that because of the "ramifications" involving SCLC and the civil rights movement, the prosecution was being handled by the Justice Department's Washington-based criminal division rather than the U.S. attorney's office in Atlanta.

Williams said Tuesday that the two stolen cars that were used by SCLC workers were purchased in Atlanta, and he indicated they were virtually the only ones out of "30 or 40" that were not donated by a new-car dealer in Connecticut through the SCLC chief there.

He said that at one point the allegations that he was implicated in the thefts were so strong and persistent the King personally called Williams into his office and asked whether he was involved.

"He said, 'I want you to tell me the truth, Hosea,'" Williams recalled. "As long as I believe in your character, I can fight for you. . . did you buy those cars knowing they were stolen. . ."

"I said, 'Dr. King, honest God, I did not.'"

"He said, 'I believe you; on home. Rest in peace.'" The FBI documents reveal that King's Atlanta home was under electronic surveillance from Nov. 8, 1963, to April 1965. Although the authorization for the wiretaps, signed by then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, covered any residence to which King might move, the documents indicate that the surveillance was ended when he moved to a new home.

According to the documents, a total of 16 "bugs," microphone plants, and telephone taps were "installed" King, in the language of one FBI memo. Among the surveillances not previously revealed were bugs planted in King's hotel rooms at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco from May 1964, and at the American Hotel in New York from 3 to 4, 1965.

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FBI-Black Activist Plan To Remove King Bared

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Newly released files reveal the FBI and an unidentified black activist worked together "in an effort to eliminate (Dr. Martin Luther) King" a few years before the civil rights leader was murdered.

The late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's secret office files were obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request by the Center for National Security Studies, a private organization, and published yesterday.

The name of the collaborator was blanked out in the released document, which was dated Dec. 1, 1964.

"(Blank) stated to DeLoach (another top FBI official) that he was faced with the difficult problem of taking steps to remove King from the national picture," the memo said.

"HE INDICATES in his comments a lack of confidence that he, alone, could be successful. It is therefore suggested that consideration be given to the following course of action:

"That DeLoach have a further discussion with (Blank) and offer to be helpful in connection with the problem of removal of King from the national scene."

It suggested that (Blank), black lead-

ers such as James Farmer and labor leader A. Philip Randolph, and "on a highly confidential basis could brief such a group on the security background of King" . . . including "the use of a tape . . . with a transcript for convenience in following the tape, (and) should be most convincing."

THE SENATE Intelligence Committee reported in 1976 that the FBI had bugged hotel rooms used by King, allegedly recording meetings he had with women.

With the purpose of "destroying his marriage," the Senate report said, the FBI mailed King a copy of the recording, with an accompanying note "which Dr. King and his advisers interpreted as threatening to release the tape recording unless Dr. King committed suicide."

In another document made public Sunday, then-Atty. Gen. Nicholas Katzenbach gave Hoover blanket authority to carry out electronic surveillance in his absence without prior authority as was required at the time.

King was shot and killed in Memphis, April 4, 1968. James Earl Ray, an escaped convict, pleaded guilty to the murder and is serving a 99-year prison sentence.

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